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President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 98 *(continued)*

Operational activities for development

Report of the Secretary-General on the progress at mid-decade on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children (A/51/256)

The President: I should like to inform the Assembly that the representative of Uganda has requested to participate in the debate on this item.

Inasmuch as the list of speakers was closed on Tuesday, 15 October, at 4 p.m., may I ask the Assembly whether there is any objection to the inclusion of this delegation in the list of speakers?

There being no objection, Uganda is included in the list.

Mr. Ruiz Pérez (Colombia): I wish to begin by expressing, on behalf of the Government and the delegation of Colombia, solidarity and deepest sympathy to the beloved fraternal Republic of Guatemala at this time of sorrow.

I have the honour of speaking at this session of the General Assembly on an issue of great importance to my country: the progress made in the implementation of the General Assembly resolution on the World Summit for Children.

Allow me to thank the Secretariat for the preparation of the report that is the basis for our deliberations. The report is particularly informative and useful for evaluating the achievements reached at mid-term and the difficulties faced in fulfilling the commitments.

The World Summit for Children was a historic milestone for the protection and defence of children. Moreover, it was the first of the United Nations world conferences of the 1990s. It initiated a new cycle which continued up to the most recent conference, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II). It was therefore a starting point for renewed efforts by the international community for social development and the fight against poverty.

The agreed objectives opened up new hopes, not only for the definition of specific goals — for example, in terms of child mortality — but for the provision of international assistance required to achieve them. These promises have been translated into national action plans, an innovative way of preventing the objectives and commitments from remaining merely on paper. At the mid-point of the decade, information on progress achieved has proved difficult to interpret. In some areas, as in the case of the fight against preventable diseases and the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, advances have certainly been significant. In areas

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such as education and the reduction of malnutrition and mortality, however, the results still leave much to be desired.

We hope that the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child will lead to its prompt incorporation into domestic legislation. This is indispensable for the support of measures pertaining to health, nutrition and education, as well as of other actions for the protection of children. It also constitutes an important base for the implementation of national plans of action.

The effectiveness of these plans depends on the capacity of the international community — and particularly the United Nations system — to provide the assistance required by the developing countries. We concur that responsibility should not fall solely to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). That would be to deny the increasing generalized character of problems concerning children in the context of the fight to eradicate poverty and to improve levels of social development.

Institutions such as the World Health Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have equally important roles to play. Only through them can we ensure that our objectives where children are concerned will become an effective part of the comprehensive strategies for human development.

Mobilization of necessary resources to attain the objectives of the Summit is one of the most serious problems we face. The capacity of developing countries to generate their own resources and earmark the necessary funds for the social sectors has been seriously eroded by fiscal constraints deriving from economic structural reform programmes and, in many cases, from the heavy burden of debt. There are no indicators suggesting a satisfactory improvement in budgetary appropriations earmarked for basic social services.

The efforts of developing countries to mobilize resources at the State, private-sector and civil-society level, cannot alone guarantee the volume of resources needed to finance programmes for children. International cooperation needs to be substantially increased, both in the form of new and additional financial resources and through broader programmes of technical assistance and other forms of international cooperation.

Only if the international community lives up to its commitments to finance social development and transfers increased resources to the developing countries will we be able to fulfil the promises made to our children seven years ago. It is now time to renew that commitment and to adopt the measures necessary to ensure compliance with the responsibilities upon which we have agreed by the year 2000.

For all of these reasons, my delegation supports the idea that in the year 2001, a special session of the General Assembly should be held to review the extent to which we have succeeded in fulfilling our promises to children and how well we have implemented the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children.

On that occasion, those sitting in supreme judgement over us will be the new generation of youths and children. At that historic moment the international community will have an opportunity to design new strategies so that our commitments to children will extend beyond the year 2000.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: The World Summit for Children, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York in 1990, was a turning point in international cooperation to promote the survival of children, their health, nutrition, education, protection and development — in general, to look out for their future. The participation of the Syrian Arab Republic in the World Summit for Children was based on its desire to participate in the actions undertaken to enhance efforts to achieve these supreme objectives.

Before mentioning the achievements of the Syrian Arab Republic since the World Summit for Children, I would first like to express our satisfaction with the report of the Secretary-General on the progress at mid-decade on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children.

While expressing our satisfaction with what has been done to implement and carry out the resolutions of the Summit for Children, we should also like to confirm the need to promote concerted action to ensure that the cause of children continues to be the focus of our concerns. According to one particular social theory, the future of the State depends on progress achieved in fostering the well-being and prosperity of children. In the other words, children are, as it were, the very kernel of the State.

Since the Summit Declaration the Syrian Arab Republic has been making considerable efforts to provide protection and development for children and the family. National action has taken place on a large scale. Symposia and conferences have been held, the most important being the first national conference on child survival, held under the auspices of the President of the Syrian Arab Republic, Hafez Al-Assad, on 28-29 January 1991. That conference followed preparatory activities by committees of experts in the social, economic, health, cultural and environmental fields.

The economic sector, various professional and social organizations and religious institutions participated in this conference, as did ministers and heads of people's organizations. An overall national plan of action was adopted at that conference, which reflected the status of Syrian children and what had been achieved to promote their interests in various areas. This programme of action, which defined the 1995 mid-decade goals, the strategic objectives up to the year 2002 and the ways and means for implementing these targets in all areas, was approved by the Syrian Government for inclusion in the country's basic economic and social plans. The programme was then submitted to the various governmental and non-governmental sectors in our country for implementation. To that end, a follow-up committee was also established under the direction of the Minister of Health.

At the beginning of this year, we drew up a national report indicating what had been accomplished in relation to the mid-decade goals, as a result of the periodic review carried out by experts. I would like to refer to some of the salient points of the review. First, in the health field, action is under way to reach the target of eliminating poliomyelitis; salt iodization is being implemented; the rate of maternal mortality has decreased from 143 in 1989 to 107 in 1995 for every 100,000 live births; 93 per cent of all children have been vaccinated and immunized against hepatitis; studies and evaluations have been made to supplement current child nutrition information; and health plans have been drawn up to promote future health care.

Secondly, in the field of education, the Syrian Arab Republic is in the vanguard of countries of the region with regard to applying a system of free and compulsory education at the primary, secondary and university levels. School attendance at the primary level for 1994-1995 was 98.8 per cent, including 99.2 per cent in the case of boys and 98.6 per cent in the case of girls.

Thirdly, the State has developed activities to assist children with disabilities through a national plan containing various programmes providing many benefits to children in the areas of training, employment and social integration. The State protects children in the aftermath of war and armed conflict, which has led to a massive and forced exodus from neighbouring areas. The State is striving for a just and comprehensive peace to put an end to the suffering of children in the aftermath of war. Similarly, the State protects children and low-income families through the provision of grants and low-cost loans.

Mr. Muntasser (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Fourthly, the Syrian Arab Republic ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992 and a ministerial committee was established to disseminate public information on the principles of the Convention within Syria and the Government, with the cooperation of official and people's organizations. The State is doing what it can to ensure that laws on children are fully observed in the social and cultural areas. These constitutional provisions are in full accordance with the spirit and letter of the international Convention on the Rights of the Child. This has been achieved by applying its provisions in our national legislation. Matters relating to children are the focus of the Syrian Government, which provides many social grants for pregnant women and mothers. It is also developing child benefits since 48 per cent of the country's population are children under the age of 18.

Thus, we are following the fundamental principles and the directives laid down by President Hafez Al-Assad. Despite our economic needs and the cost of defending our territorial integrity, we are very proud of the accomplishments of our country. Furthermore, our country will continue its efforts to ensure and promote the health, education and protection of children, as well as focus on population matters and the environment, to ensure that Syrian children have the requisite level of education to enjoy a bright future.

Now that we are discussing the sacred mission of caring for children, I would like to refer to another humanitarian question, and that is: can any child in the world develop in the context of occupation and massacre? All the children in the Golan, the occupied Arab territories or in southern Lebanon are suffering as a result of the occupation. The reply to the question is

found in United Nations resolutions. In this regard, I would like to reiterate that the costs of war are far greater than the cost of peace and must affect the needs of children.

Mr. Menlang (Sudan) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: It gives me great pleasure to inform you of the measures taken in my country in the context of the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and of the cooperation between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan, the National Council on Children's Welfare and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). On 23 June 1996, a symposium was held in our capital, Khartoum, to keep members of the national Parliament abreast of ways they can contribute through legislation to the implementation and furtherance of the provisions of the Convention. The symposium was inaugurated by the First Vice-President, Mr. Al-Zubayr Muhammad Salih, who stressed the following positions of principle in his inaugural statement.

First, the Government of Sudan takes a special interest in the implementation of the international Convention, particularly as the Sudan was among its first signatories. The President himself participated in the signing. Secondly, the interest of Sudan in the rights of children arises from the faith of Islam, which cherishes man and safeguards the rights of children. Thirdly, to translate this interest into reality, the Government of Sudan established the National Council on Children's Welfare and takes special interest in the education of children. It has made elementary education compulsory and takes special interest in the health of children, including our interest in establishing children's hospitals. Fourthly, the efforts of the Sudanese Government for peace and stability will continue until it has put an end to the causes of displacement, so that children can lead a happy life with their families and parents. The State attaches special interest to the programme of peace, development and stability, of which children will be the main beneficiary. Fifthly, the First Vice-President stressed Sudan's full commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Many documents were discussed at the symposium, which together highlight various aspects of the welfare of children. As expected, the members of the National Council who took part were familiar with the issues, demonstrated their enthusiasm and pledged to promote the well-being of children in their provinces. A final document was adopted at the symposium which is aimed at ensuring healthy living standards for the children of Sudan. The document also provides for priority to be given to children's welfare in national development programmes. Cognizant of the need to enhance governmental and voluntary institutions, the members of the National Council will endeavour to implement the Convention's provisions and enhance efforts to safeguard children's health and eradicate poverty, famine and malnutrition. Furthermore, it will seek to promote peace and the culture of peace and to enhance international cooperation designed to safeguard the needs of children and their rights. In conclusion, we emphasize our readiness to apply the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In this connection, our Parliament ratified this instrument at a special session, thus making it a legally binding State document.

Paragraph 161 of the Secretary-General's report states that conflict and insecurity in the southern part of the country are a barrier to the eradication of guinea-worm disease and that almost half of the world's remaining cases are in the Sudan. I would like to inform you of some of the efforts being made by the Sudan to eliminate the disease. Despite the insecurity caused by the rebel movement, the Sudanese Government is cooperating with the Carter Center to eradicate this disease by the year 2000. Former President Carter has visited the Sudan more than once and a Carter Center office has been opened in the Sudan to cooperate with appropriate government organs. I call upon the international community, through the United Nations, to provide material and technical assistance to help eliminate this disease. We also wish to emphasize that the rebel movement stands in the way of implementing the programme to control guinea-worm disease. It also uses children in armed conflict, thereby endangering their lives.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): As one enters the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) headquarters in New York, one sees an inscription on the wall near the receptionist's desk which says that the earth has not been given to us by our parents but has been lent to us by our children. I think that inscription summarizes the essence of our debate here today.

Our deep appreciation goes to the Secretary-General for introducing the report on the progress at mid-decade on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children. This report has certainly provided the Member States with a unique opportunity to have a comprehensive assessment of the progress that has been made so far towards "keeping the promise" made during the World Summit for Children in 1990. It also permits us to share our experience with a

view to finding more effective means to address the challenges that lie ahead of us.

We are happy to note that the report indicates that significant progress has been made in improving the conditions of children in most parts of the world during the last five years. Yet we agree fully with the Secretary-General that a great deal remains to be done. Nonetheless, one fact deserves our attention and appreciation, and it is that the coordinated efforts undertaken by the United Nations agencies, in particular UNICEF, the global agency for children, and Governments of Member States, and the initiatives by the members of civil society, particularly the non-governmental organizations, have set an example of how the international community can be mobilized for the welfare and well-being of children. That is what we call the grand alliance for children. This testifies to the fact that given political will and appropriate mobilization we can have an impact on the future of this world.

Improving the conditions of children is closely linked with overall societal progress. It is said that poverty has a feminine face. We say it has the face of children as well. When the mother is struggling with poverty, children are definitely the victims. In addition, children, as the most vulnerable section of the society, remain at the receiving end of every onslaught of poverty. Therefore, any efforts directed at improving the condition of children has a societal dimension, and this needs to be appreciated properly. We are happy that the report of the Secretary-General has made some significant references to this compulsion.

Conscious of this imperative, successive governments in Bangladesh, in particular the present Government, have pursued rather aggressive strategies to address the problems confronted by children. Bangladesh has become a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which forms the basis of our national activities in this important area. In fact, this element constitutes one of the major components of our struggle to eradicate poverty as well. We fully agree with the Secretary-General when he said during the introduction of his report that this Convention is a social tool to reach the unreached and that investing in children and women is the path to sustainable development.

Our efforts have already started to produce tangible results. In Bangladesh, we have been able to immunize 91 per cent of the children through the extensive network of the Extended Programme of Immunization. The child mortality rate has declined significantly. We are hopeful that we will be able to meet our target in this sector by the end of the decade. As the home of oral rehydration therapy (ORT), Bangladesh has made a notable contribution towards the reduction of death from diarrhoea. We are proud to say that the mortality rate from this tropical disease has dropped significantly in recent years. Nonetheless, our struggle to eliminate this threat completely continues. We have mounted an 18-month communication campaign to boost the level of ORT use from 45 per cent to 80 per cent once and for all at the earliest possible date. More than 55,000 primary school teachers have been engaged in this campaign since 1993.

Primary education is considered to be an essential element in improving the conditions of children. Pursuant to its objective, the Bangladesh Government has made primary and secondary education free for girls in rural areas. Special incentives in the form of "food for education" have been introduced to encourage students, particularly the girl students, to go to school. We are hopeful that through these policies we will be able to empower the girls, which may in the long term help to improve the condition of the poorest section of the population in Bangladesh.

My country has also initiated some imaginative steps to address a child-related issue, which I would like to share with the Assembly. Involvement of children in the work force is a concomitant problem of poverty in many developing countries. We are not immune to this problem either. In order to address the problem in a humane and constructive way, the Bangladesh Government signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Labour Organization and UNICEF last year with a view to eradicating child labour from the garment manufacturing sector. These retrenched child workers will be sent to school and training centres to develop their educational and work skills. This arrangement will be financed jointly by UNICEF and the private garment sector. We hope that this can serve as a model for others facing similar problems in their countries.

We are conscious of our limitations and resource capabilities. Despite the fact that we are devoting more than 40 per cent of our annual budget to the social sector, the magnitude of the problem constantly defies our efforts. We therefore think that the national efforts should be supplemented by regional and global efforts. In order to muster the desired level of resources, efforts must be made to reverse the present downward trend of official development assistance. At the regional level, we have

already adopted a regional plan for South Asia under the Colombo Resolution on Children, which was endorsed by the Seventh Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 1993. We are committed to fulfilling our obligations under this plan and hope that cooperation at the regional level will have more impact on our common efforts to tackle this issue. In particular, we believe that regional cooperation is essential to stop transborder trafficking in children and utilizing them as bonded labour and prostitutes.

I would like to take this opportunity to record the appreciation of the Government of Bangladesh for the constructive engagement of the various United Nations agencies in the socio-economic development of Bangladesh, including efforts to raise the well-being of children. In particular, I would like to commend the support extended to us by UNICEF to improve the conditions of children in Bangladesh. It is our hope that the United Nations development agencies will remain actively engaged with us in our relentless efforts for the eradication of poverty, in which an essential focus remains on the children.

In conclusion, we join with other delegations in fully endorsing the Secretary-General's recommendations for holding a special session of the General Assembly in five years' time to examine the progress made in fulfilling the promises for children. Following the World Summit in 1990, we in Bangladesh strongly hope that the year 2000 will see the second summit level gathering on children in this body.

Mrs. Castro de Barish (Costa Rica) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: The protection and support of children has always been part of Costa Rica's social policy. That goal was established in the 1920s with the creation as a government agency of the National Board for Children, which is still very active today.

Like all the delegations that have participated in the debate on agenda item 100, we also wish to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the report he has presented to us (A/51/256) with regard to progress at mid-decade on implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children, which my delegation had the honour to co-sponsor.

Costa Rica supports the assessments and comprehensive information as well as the realistic conclusions of the report. We welcome its account of the response of the United Nations system, in particular, on the important and fundamental role played by various components of the United Nations system such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). WHO developed health-related goals in collaboration with the UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy, while UNESCO and UNICEF collaborated on complementary activities in the educational sector through the Joint Committee on Education and the Conference on Education for All held in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand. We wish also to stress the importance of the Education Summit held in New Delhi with the support of UNESCO, UNICEF and UNDP in the joint project on "Education for All: Making it Work". Undoubtedly, this is an example of joint action that can serve as a model and yield very valuable and positive results. We support the statement that any substantial plan to reduce illiteracy among adults must begin by effectively improving primary education for the benefit of children who will, otherwise, be the adult illiterates of tomorrow.

Costa Rica endorses the observation of Nicaragua concerning mobilization of resources since, indeed, until greater efforts are made to achieve mobilization of additional resources, it will not be possible for developing countries to promote the proposed goals. The report recognizes that only an average of 12 per cent of national budgets is earmarked for basic social services. Clearly, in many developing countries, structural adjustments have not always had a human face.

My delegation wishes to stress the conclusion in paragraph 285 of the report that:

> "The goals established at the 1990 World Summit for Children have had an extraordinary mobilizing power, generating a renewed level of activity on behalf of children around the world and creating new partnerships between Governments, non-governmental organizations, donors, the media, civil society and international organizations in pursuit of a common purpose. There is a wealth of evidence to show that the World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action, together with the almost simultaneous passage into international law of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, provided the impetus and the legal framework for galvanizing global action behind the cause of children." *(A/51/256, para. 285)*

My delegation wishes to stress here the well-being of girls, since it has been demonstrated that the situation of

girls is even more precarious than that of boys in all circumstances of life.

With regard to progress made in reaching the goals in the Latin American and Caribbean region, we note with great interest the information provided in the regional overview, notably on achieving universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at mid-decade. My country has adapted its national legislation on protection and promotion of the rights of children in order to fulfil the commitments assumed as a State party to the Convention. Costa Rica some years ago established the office of ombudsman, whose role is to defend the rights of all people whether they are citizens of the country or residents of any nationality or origin.

Returning to the report, we note that efforts at the international level to achieve universal ratification by the end of the decade have been less successful but, nevertheless, considerable. My delegation respectfully urges Governments that have not yet signed and/or acceded to the Convention to consider doing so in order to make universal ratification a splendid reality as we approach the year 2000.

In annex II of the report, which indicates the status of signature of the World Summit Declaration, preparation of national programmes of action and ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as of 31 May 1996, we are pleased to note that Latin America and the Caribbean have fully ratified the Convention and signed the Summit Declaration, and virtually all the States parties have completed their national plans of action.

My delegation wishes to take this opportunity cordially and respectfully to urge States parties to the Convention that have not yet done so to respond favourably to the request addressed to them by the Secretary-General under article 50 of the Convention, which provides that an amendment adopted in accordance with paragraph 1 of that article shall enter into force when it has been approved by the General Assembly and accepted by a two-thirds majority of the States parties to the Convention. The States parties have already adopted the amendment during consideration of the recommendation at the Conference of States parties to the Convention on 12 December 1995. The Assembly later gave its approval on 21 December 1995. Costa Rica's amendment consists of replacing the word "ten" by the word "eighteen" in article 43, paragraph 2, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and it was approved without a vote. The Secretary-General's letter containing his request to States parties to the Convention was sent on 29 March 1996. Accordingly, my Government would be most grateful to the Governments of States parties to the Convention for their valuable support for this amendment, whose purpose is to endow the Committee on the Rights of the Child with eight experts in addition to those it now has in order to carry out the multiple aspects of its mandate. Let us not forget what James Grant, the late Executive Director of UNICEF always used to say: "Children first".

Mr. Kiwanuka (Uganda): I should like to start by thanking the Secretary-General for the report on progress at mid-decade on implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children. Six years ago, Heads of State and Government assembled in this Hall adopted a World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and a Plan of Action for its implementation. This was only the beginning of a series of global United Nations summits and conferences which will culminate with the World Food Summit in Rome next month. The deliberations of all these meetings have helped to redefine thinking on human development, to further attempts at achieving a qualitative difference to the lives of people and, not least, to reaffirm the commitment to the needs of children.

Although progress towards achievement of the goals we set ourselves for the survival, protection and development of all children has been uneven throughout the world, it is gratifying to note that programmes of action for children are being implemented in 155 countries. What is equally significant is that 187 States, including Uganda, have now ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The challenge now is for Governments to ensure implementation of the obligations undertaken under the Convention.

My delegation appreciates the positive trends reported by the Secretary-General to improve the prospects of survival and the lives of children worldwide. Encouraging progress has been made in immunization and the eradication of guinea-worm disease. We commend also the great efforts made to address iodine deficiency, promote oral rehydration programmes and improve access to safe water.

Unfortunately, as the report indicates, there appears to be slower progress in reaching the goals in sub-Saharan Africa, where there are still difficulties in achieving optimum improvements in the quality of nutrition, reducing maternal mortality and providing access to basic education, particularly for girls. Sub-

Saharan Africa is still too vulnerable to drought, environmental degradation and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, together with disruptions caused by armed conflict.

It is not possible to discuss the implementation of the decisions of the Summit for Children without acknowledging the important role that UNICEF has played and continues to play. Indeed, we note with satisfaction that Ms. Bellamy, its Executive Director, has made the implementation of the Summit for Children one of its main activities. The Fund has done important work in providing assistance to countries, including Uganda, in the preparation of national programmes of action for children and their subsequent implementation, particularly in the area of coordination and monitoring and the development of inter-agency cooperation in the field to improve girls' education and mitigate the consequences of female illiteracy in our region.

In the opinion of the Ugandan delegation, the results of the mid-decade review and the national reports prepared by many countries should be used widely by UNICEF in accentuating its targets for the period up to the year 2000 and thus influence the operationalization of country activities.

The Government of Uganda, for its part, is about to embark on the implementation of its pledge to provide free primary education for four children per family. Uganda commends the measures adopted at the Consensus of Dakar (June 1993), which were the outcome of the 1992 International Conference for Assistance to the African Child, and reaffirms that it still remains the principal point of reference for follow-up to the World Summit for Children in sub-Saharan Africa. The participating countries, including Uganda, committed themselves to translate the goals of the Summit into concrete national programmes of action. Nevertheless, we are aware that there have been shortfalls that are concealed by misleading national averages, as a result of the difficulties and contrasts of major social disparities and the children who are victims of exploitation, of physical and emotional violence, and of abandonment and injustice.

Uganda therefore reaffirms its commitment to share the responsibility for ensuring the survival, protection and development of all children and taking note of the Secretary-General's proposal to hold an end-of-decade review meeting to examine the fulfilment of the "promises to children". It is in that spirit that we anticipate more progress on child survival and great improvement in their quality of life.

Agenda item 45 *(continued)*

Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/348)

Mr. Wilmot (Ghana): At the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in March 1995, world leaders took tough political decisions and committed themselves to create an economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that would enable people to achieve social development and social justice. They recognized the significance of human well-being for all and agreed to give the highest priority to the achievement of these goals now and into the twenty-first century.

In December 1995, this Assembly initiated the debate on the implementation of the outcome of the Summit. For the second year running, this item has been inscribed on our agenda, underlining the importance that we all attach to the implementation of the outcome of the Conference. In this connection, my delegation fully associates itself with the statement made by Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The World Summit for Social Development is one of a number of world conferences which began in 1990 with the World Summit for Children and ended recently in June 1996 with the Istanbul Conference on Human Settlements. Organized under the auspices of the United Nations, these global conferences have focused attention on the complex phenomenon of development in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, legal and related fields in a holistic manner. With the disappearance of East-West ideologies and North-South confrontations, the potential for cooperation and the forging of a sense of partnership to seek global solutions to world problems have gained heightened awareness and have made all this achievement possible.

Benefiting from this new sense of responsibility and solidarity within and between nations, the World Summit for Social Development agreed on 10 major commitments around the overall theme of poverty eradication, full employment and social integration. In addition, the Summit came up with a Programme of Action that outlined the policies and actions required to implement the principles and fulfil the commitments agreed to in Copenhagen.

We are also mindful of the ground-breaking strategies the Summit adopted to assign specific responsibilities for actions to fully implement all of its commitments and objectives. Thus while it acknowledged that individual countries bear the primary responsibility for the attainment of the goals of the conference, it also recognized that the support of the international community as a whole — including of the United Nations system, the multilateral financial institutions, bilateral donors, non-governmental organizations and all actors of civil society — will be crucial if we are to realize all the objectives of the conference.

It is too early at this stage to attempt to take stock of what has been achieved so far in terms of implementing the outcome of the Summit. Suffice it to say that my delegation is satisfied to see and learn about the various initiatives and engagements of all countries, large and small, rich and poor, as well as those of the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and actors of civil socicty in general, to implement the commitments.

My own country, for instance, has established a National Development Planning Commission that is charged with implementing and monitoring the Government's macroeconomic and sectoral policies to ensure broad-based sustained economic growth and equitable and sustainable development that meets the aspirations of all members of our society. A comprehensive development policy document, "Ghana Vision 20-20: The First Step", placed before Parliament recently, has been fully debated; its provisions are being translated into a national programme of action or reference document that will inform the entire governmental structure, non-governmental organizations and the international community of the enabling environment established for the country's priority social and economic activities. Our programme of action places a great deal of emphasis on national coordination mechanisms, capacity-building and the mobilization of internal and external resources to ensure its effective implementation.

At the international level, even though official development assistance continues to decline in real terms, certain countries have raised their level of assistance in support of social development. In this connection, it is pertinent to mention the recent meeting held in Oslo in April 1996 on the implementation of the 20/20 initiative, according to which interested developed- and developing-country partners will allocate 20 per cent of official development assistance and 20 per cent of the national budget, respectively, to basic social programmes. It is also encouraging to note that at the annual meeting of the Bretton Woods institutions a few days ago, some encouraging decisions were taken to address not only the issues of debt, but also the overall financial and resource problems of developing countries, and to ensure that structural adjustment programmes will be carried out in a human-centred manner.

By far the greatest impetus and momentum given to the implementation of the outcome of the world social Summit has come from the United Nations itself. Since 1995, our Organization has assumed a true leadership role in the follow-up to the Summit — and, indeed, in the follow-up to all the other reinforcing global conferences it organized — by assigning responsibilities to what has come to be called lead United Nations agencies, which monitor specific task forces that have been set up to implement the outcome of the various conferences.

Having declared 1996 the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, the General Assembly has taken measures to review progress towards poverty eradication and to provide policy guidelines to encourage further actions in this regard. The recent mid-term review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the launching in March 1996 of the Secretary-General's Special Initiative on Africa must be seen in this light. The Economic and Social Council has, since its 1995 substantive session, and in particular its 1996 substantive session, intensified its dialogue with the Bretton Woods institutions and other specialized agencies of the United Nations in support of a coordinated implementation of economic and social development programmes. Furthermore, the Economic and Social Council has gone beyond this to involve all its functional and subsidiary bodies — and in particular the Commission for Social Development — in the Conference follow-up.

All these actions and measures assure us that we are on the right path, even if there is still a long way to go to achieve the goals and objective agreed upon by our leaders in Copenhagen. We need to continue to invest in the implementation process the same political will that characterized the agreements reached at the Summit. The reforms in the United Nations system as a whole should be seen as part of this overarching desire to equip our Organization so that it will be better able to discharge its obligations under the Charter, not only to maintain world peace and security but also to promote social progress and greater freedom for all in such a manner that the human person becomes the central object of our collective endeavours and attention.

Ms. Gordon (Jamaica): I wish to express my Government's support for the statement made yesterday by Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and to join previous speakers in thanking the Secretary-General for the report contained in document A/51/348.

The report is very thorough in its description of follow-up activities undertaken by Governments and by the entire United Nations system since the General Assembly's adoption last year of a resolution on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. As described by the Secretary-General, there has been a great effort to implement the provisions of the resolution and to consolidate joint activities on the part of the United Nations bodies engaged in the follow-up process. My delegation wishes to highlight specifically the recent decisions taken by the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council concerning the future organization of their work in connection with their respective roles in the implementation process.

In this respect, the elaboration by the Commission of its agenda and multi-year work programme for 1997 to 2000 demonstrates a keen commitment and willingness to begin to fulfil its expanded mandate. Likewise, Jamaica wishes to endorse the resolutions adopted by the Economic and Social Council during its recent substantive session, particularly on the follow-up to the World Summit and on the future role of the Commission for Social Development.

We could not agree more with the concern expressed by the Economic and Social Council for mainstreaming the gender perspective in United Nations activities for poverty eradication, and for taking a harmonized and integrated approach to intergovernmental consideration of poverty eradication.

Jamaica, like other Member States, participated actively in the World Summit for Social Development and fully endorsed the fundamental principles embodied in the Copenhagen Declaration. We are fully conscious, however, that the true measure of our commitment must be demonstrated in concrete actions.

In this connection, some 60 programmes contributing towards poverty reduction are currently being spearheaded by Jamaican Government ministries. In addition, several non-governmental organizations as well as multilateral and bilateral donors, have been contributing to the poverty-reduction process by initiating or sponsoring a range of projects in Jamaica.

It should be emphasized that the cornerstone of Jamaica's poverty-reduction efforts is human-resource development. The human-resource development programme, which consists mainly of investment and policy reforms in education and health, represents the strongest expression of the Jamaican Government's intention to alleviate poverty through investment in human capital.

In keeping with its commitment to ensuring a strengthened framework for national, regional and international cooperation for social development, Jamaica has instituted definite planning, implementation and monitoring systems as part of its follow-up to the Summit. These include: first, the establishment of a national committee, headed by the Minister responsible for social development, to monitor implementation of a national plan of action; secondly, the launching of the national poverty-alleviation programme; thirdly, the involvement of civil society through a social-partnership approach; fourthly, fostering social integration through the recognition of the role of the family in social stability; and, lastly, employment generation through labour-market reform.

The response of the Jamaican people, including elements of the private sector, to these initiatives has been very positive. There appears to be a collective recognition of the urgency with which the issues of poverty and social development need to be addressed in my country.

We cannot overemphasize the vulnerability of the economies of small States such as those in our subregion. Caribbean economies remain severely hampered by the external-debt burden, unfair terms of trade, wide disparities in income distribution and threats posed by international drug trafficking, among other factors. Structural-adjustment policies adopted since the 1980s have eroded many of the earlier gains made in the social sector, and it is partly these deficiencies that Caribbean Governments, including my own, hope to address by the adoption of our respective social-development programmes. It is recognized, however, that these very programmes are often quite ambitious in their scope and in what they seek to achieve. Their implementation, therefore, presents a further strain in the short term on the already burdened State machineries of Caribbean Governments.

In this connection, it has long been recognized that there is a correspondingly urgent need for the

mobilization of resources to assist national poverty-eradication/social-development programmes. We therefore look forward to the presentation at next year's substantive session of the Economic and Social Council of the Secretary-General's report on all aspects of new and innovative ideas for generating funds for globally agreed commitments and priorities, particularly those established at recent United Nations conferences and summit meetings.

On a similar point, my Government wishes to restate its concern that there is need for the scientific community to be further sensitized to the crucial importance of science and technology in contributing to poverty eradication and social development.

In conclusion, Jamaica wishes to reiterate its appreciation to the relevant agencies of the United Nations system for their responsiveness to the various Government initiatives in the area of social development. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), to name but a few, have all participated strategically in national consultations and have made both financial and human resources available to the Government of Jamaica. They have played a key role in facilitating collaboration with multilateral financial institutions in mobilizing support for poverty-alleviation initiatives.

Despite some persistent problems, my Government remains firmly committed to the implementation of the Summit commitments. We have no choice. We look forward to continued dialogue with our partners in the international arena on ways and means of achieving global solutions to the myriad problems that we face in the area of social development, including poverty eradication.

Ms. Ramírez (Argentina) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: My delegation takes special interest in speaking in the debate on agenda item 45, "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development".

United Nations concern for social development is nothing new. Suffice it to recall the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, the International Development Strategy and the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, which was adopted at the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly.

These earlier steps led to the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, demonstrating once again that the international community is truly attempting to deal with the most serious social problems by proposing innovative methods and approaches.

We are especially grateful for the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/348), which gives us a compendium of the initiatives taken by national Governments, the measures adopted by the United Nations, the activities of the specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, the mobilization of financial resources and the participation by civil society and other elements.

At the meeting of the Commission for Social Development held last May, my country spoke about a topic that deserves special attention, namely, the eradication of poverty. On that occasion, we noted that the subject is one of extraordinary magnitude and implications, that it is growing worldwide and that it is one of the more complicated items in the social agenda.

In Argentina, favourable economic trends led to a significant increase in gross domestic product in the early months of this year. There are also concrete economic factors and developments that can be viewed as positive gains in the struggle against poverty. Minimal inflation, made and planned investments, increases in exports that will further promote productivity and employment — all these tend to confirm this trend.

We are aware that much remains to be done, and therefore my Government's activities, principally through the Secretariat of State for Social Development and with the cooperation of provincial and local authorities, have been stepped up and expanded in recent years.

Thus, we have implemented a broad-based social policy that includes support for housing construction, the provision of emergency food assistance to the needy and meals for children, and the promotion of community activities, along with various types of family assistance, and productive activities for workers in specific areas.

We have set up a social-information base in order better to monitor and systematically analyse the status of poverty in Argentina. This has served as a means of focusing social programmes and has helped in evaluating the before-and-after performance of those directed especially to the poor.

Through the participatory fund for social investment, we have established machinery for financing

community initiatives in the poorest parts of the country. We have created social-development programmes along border areas, thereby improving their inhabitants' quality of life. Likewise, we have developed programmes for neighbourhood improvement and for assistance to especially vulnerable children.

These actions are being taken in keeping with two essential elements: first, greater emphasis on education, since, in the final analysis, poverty cannot truly be eliminated without effective education; and secondly, a reform of the State that promotes investment so that economic growth can lower the unemployment rate. These two elements are truly the only substantive approaches to eradicating poverty. All these actions are being pursued in a framework of good governance and austerity.

On a regional level, our firm commitment to fulfil the agreements of the World Summit led to the Summit Meeting of the Rio Group in Buenos Aires, from which emerged the Buenos Aires declaration on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. We also proposed a temporary secretariat for the convening of a technical meeting to develop an operational plan. The goal of that meeting, held in Quito, Ecuador, was to establish machinery among the Rio Group member countries for following up on the decisions reached at Buenos Aires. Jointly with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Organization of American States, we also held in Buenos Aires an American technical seminar on programmes to overcome poverty. That meeting took place within the framework of the proposed work plan. Finally, I should like to highlight the initiative to send a group of "White Helmets" to work jointly with the countries requiring them for the production of food, food aid and assistance in general.

All these activities, together with Argentina's contributions to the various funds that, directly or indirectly, have an impact on the eradication of poverty, and with the work of many non-governmental organizations and private entities, are testimony to our intense and sustained national commitment. According to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) *Human Development Report*, Argentina ranks sixth among developing countries and thirtieth among United Nations Members. This provides an even stronger impetus for persevering and forging ahead.

The eradication of poverty occupies a central place on Argentina's agenda. We have taken effective action for its eradication on various levels, because we know that poverty degrades and diminishes human beings, and our commitment is to the human being.

Mr. Meléndez-Barahona (El Salvador) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I have the honour to make the following statement on agenda item 45, entitled "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development", on behalf of the Central American countries: Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and El Salvador. Central America shares and supports the criteria set forth in the statement made yesterday by Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

At the outset, we wish to express our deepest sympathy at the disaster that occurred yesterday in the sisterly Republic of Guatemala, in which some 79 people died and many others were wounded when a sporting event turned tragic. This sad event has touched both Central America and the world of sports.

In the context of the other world conferences the United Nations has held in recent years, the convening of the world social Summit in Copenhagen, Denmark, in March 1995, was a historic political achievement. At that event Heads of State or Government acknowledged the importance of social development and human well-being. They reviewed the various factors that affect the achievement of social-development goals as well as the pressing need to achieve consensus on national, regional and international measures and machinery to resolve the urgent social problems that seriously challenge the international community.

The convening of that important Summit is testimony to the globalization that has occurred, a process that has given rise to universal understanding and awareness, as well as the commitment and political will to redefine the paradigms of development. This process takes account of the past and present realities that characterize the prevailing international system, a system that places the human being at the centre of development and that recognizes that our economies must be more effectively reoriented to respond to the needs of peoples. We must emphasize that this needs to take place in a context in which social and economic development, environmental protection, and peace and democracy are interdependent, mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development.

Central America accepted the changes in the global situation with optimism, especially with respect to the expectations that have arisen for the creation of a new international system characterized by solidarity and cooperation among States. In that context, we supported the holding of the World Social Summit and of other world conferences, because we believe that the problems of development, viewed comprehensively and from the perspective of sustainability, present the greatest challenge to our societies. This is due to their close interrelationship with peace, stability, democracy and human well-being. Despite this positive outlook, however, we recognize that the less developed nations throughout the world must still overcome considerable and serious obstacles in order to surmount the structural causes of backwardness and promote sustainable development, and that they are negatively affected by changes in the international order. These changes have increased vulnerability, insecurity and uncertainty in many of our countries, especially because our domestic conditions are not adapted to the requirements of changing technology and competition that must be met in order for us to become part of the global economy. The less developed nations must face this challenge with resolve.

We cannot ignore the fact that the gap between the developed and the developing countries has been widening, not narrowing. Most developing countries still can only aspire to make progress in such campaigns as those against poverty, unemployment, the spread of disease, environmental risks, arms and drug trafficking, money laundering and terrorism, as well as campaigns to empower women and consolidate democracy and sustainable development. This is due not only to the scarce and limited resources available, but also to the exhaustion of development cooperation funds.

The international community has, in recent years, witnessed changes and advances in the political, economic and social spheres of Central America. With the help of international cooperation, we have overcome severe crises. These joint efforts have shifted from the political-economic sphere to the socio-economic sphere, giving greater impetus to the establishment of a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development. Making progress in these areas and consolidating that already made is closely linked to the implementation of the commitments set forth in our regional development strategy. This strategy, devised by the Central American presidents in the Alliance for Sustainable Development, encompasses human development, economic growth and environmental sustainability. It is an initiative aimed at redefining the Central American development model by revitalizing our relationships with the international community and renewing our involvement in a globalized, interdependent world economy. The implementation of this strategy is based not only on the signatory States' taking greater responsibility, but also on the assistance of extra-regional partners that are concerned about the development of the subregion and wish to provide financial support to the initiative and share some responsibility for its implementation. In 1994 the United States of America became the first such partner when it signed the joint United States-Central America declaration.

We also believe it is important to point out that for the foundations of the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America to become a reality we must make the greatest efforts in the region to overcome the major obstacles of extreme poverty and poverty in general. We must have human resources that are well trained at all levels so that the majority of the population — especially the most vulnerable sectors — will have access to health and sanitation services.

We must foster and strengthen democratic participation in the political sphere to develop, through a sharing of responsibility between the State, local government and civil society, a model of unified efforts for social development.

Central America is currently promoting policies that stress social development, particularly to reduce poverty, create jobs and promote productive employment. At the same time, it is evaluating and reformulating commitments in keeping with the realities of our countries, in order to develop strategic plans in priority areas, seek sources of financing for their implementation and allocate responsibility to the governmental bodies entrusted with their implementation. This includes efforts to achieve real coordination between the agencies of the United Nations system that cooperate in the formulation and the implementation of development plans at the national level.

We are grateful for the Secretary-General's report (A/51/348) on the agenda item under consideration. It presents an encouraging view of the feasibility of applying the results of the World Summit for Social Development. This can be inferred from the positive responses of Governments and international institutions with regard to the importance of the Summit and its follow-up.

It is important to maintain the momentum that began at Copenhagen in order to proceed progressively towards the goals of eradicating absolute poverty, reducing general poverty and increasing employment and social integration in each national context.

In reviewing the report of the Secretary-General, we wish to emphasize some of its aspects.

The initiatives of Austria and Denmark deserve our support. Their results make possible a better understanding of the problems of social development.

We welcome with interest the Declaration of the Group of Seven industrialized Powers, which was adopted at their meeting in France this year, in which we should highlight the offers to create a new global partnership for development, to cooperate towards achieving greater effectiveness in multilateral institutions and to provide the necessary support for development.

Special attention is warranted by the proposals of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development on a global partnership for development to achieve specific goals in the social sphere, and by the 20/20 initiative, which gives priority to basic social services for the vulnerable sectors of the population, a matter on which the Ambassador of Norway spoke more fully yesterday. Both of these proposals are consistent with the basic goals of the World Summit for Social Development. We believe, however, that they should be examined in depth so that we can have a more detailed understanding of them and determine how viable they are as part of national programmes for social development. This should be done in keeping with the priorities set by individual Governments — especially in developing countries — so that there will be coordination and consistency between international efforts and those of the Governments concerned.

We are optimistic that the globalization process and interdependence will lead to a better understanding and to international solidarity that will improve the trends in official development assistance and gradually achieve the donor community's agreed goal of providing 0.7 per cent of gross national product for that purpose, in fulfilment of the promises made at Copenhagen. We also hope to see an increase in the financing of development programmes, which are necessary to achieve the goals of the World Summit for Social Development.

With regard to the operation and cooperation of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations, which play a fundamental role in following up fulfilment of the goals of the Summit, we believe that coordination and consistency in their activities must be enhanced. We should establish a direct and dynamic link with national agencies and the work they do in each country, in order to evaluate progress in the implementation of the commitments.

One of the immediate goals of the World Summit for Social Development is the eradication of extreme poverty and poverty in general. Poverty affects broad sectors of the world's population and generates despair and social conflict. We believe that in seeking solutions the development of policies to combat poverty must take a number of aspects into account. Among those aspects are the following.

Broad agreements should be reached at national, regional and international levels to put in place a long-term anti-poverty strategy based on a determination of the basic facts and features characterizing poverty.

Poverty has structural roots. Accordingly, we must approach its causes, not simply its effects.

There should be greater understanding of the problem's scope and dimensions, and an open and flexible attitude should be adopted.

Poverty is a massive and chronic phenomenon, especially in developing nations. It calls for greater productivity and the creation of employment.

Economic policy instruments should not exacerbate social conflict, adversely affect the distribution of income or contribute to the spread of poverty among the most vulnerable groups.

Economic strategies aimed at guaranteeing individual liberties, private property and free competition should also have the goals of eradicating poverty and promoting a greater degree of economic democratization.

Priorities should not be exclusively focused on macroeconomic factors or global balance; instead, economic policies should include measures to improve living conditions and economic and social opportunities for the most vulnerable groups.

National redistribution policies should gradually be established. These are necessary in order to break the vicious circle of poverty and should include improvements in health, nutrition, training, food programmes and policies for investing in human capital.

The dynamic redistribution of wealth should improve credit for the production sector, public investment in the productive infrastructure and public social expenditure. It should make possible the development of a policy of rising productivity and economic opportunities for the poor.

There should be greater access to credit for small producers, especially those in the agricultural sector, whose modernization cannot come about through the free working of market mechanisms.

There should be greater technical and financial support for informal activities to improve the institutional environment and stimulate and increase its productive abilities, thus fostering a more integrated economy and social progress.

There should be a realistic re-evaluation of employment and salaries that takes into account the social costs of adjustment problems and their impact on living standards of societies, particularly among the most vulnerable sectors.

Central America is pursuing efforts to promote social development with equity. While recognizing that the primary responsibility to achieve the goals of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action falls to our Governments, we believe that the importance of cooperation and international assistance to achieve full implementation is beyond question.

The spirit of solidarity, dialogue and cooperation displayed at the World Summit for Social Development should be put into practice in order to create a more favourable international economic environment and promote more effective cooperation. We believe it is indispensable to establish an international strategy based on a new partnership that will make the fulfilment of our commitments viable. That strategy should bear in mind the interests and priorities of developing countries for the solution of their serious problems. This would result in an improvement in social conditions and the elimination of the roots of social tensions and conflicts.

Finally, within the framework of this new partnership it is important that we pursue the process of revitalizing and restructuring the United Nations. We believe that the capacity and efficiency of the Organization need to be enhanced. The Organization needs to be given sufficient financial resources to fulfil its mandate for development and social progress.

We must also stress, however, that by no means should programmes in the economic and social sphere undergo budgetary cuts. International financial institutions should re-evaluate the effects of structural-adjustment policies and the negative consequences of debt servicing in relation to the promotion of sustainable social development on a global scale.

Mr. Insanally (Guyana): Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development is a matter of great interest to the Government and people of Guyana. As the Chairman of the Group of 77 stated yesterday, developing countries everywhere have an interest in ensuring that an enabling environment is created both nationally and internationally for social development.

Our own commitment to social development has been clearly demonstrated, not least by our decision, despite limited resources, consistently to increase — both in absolute and percentage terms — that portion of the national budget destined to the social sector, and more particularly to health and education services. The current allocation accounts for some 16 per cent of the 1996 budget and will be increased to 20 per cent in 1997. In so doing, we will have fulfilled our obligations under the 20/20 initiative, to which we fully subscribe.

Our full acceptance of this initiative is less the result of any belief in a magic formula than of our persuasion of the value of people-centred development and of the "Oslo Consensus on 20/20" as a means of achieving that goal. We are convinced that, within the framework of a global partnership for development, most basic social services can be made available to all peoples and the scourge of poverty can be removed from the world.

We are pleased to note that steps have been taken at the intergovernmental level over the past year to follow up the World Social Summit that, in our view, are evidence of the resolve of the international community to honour the Summit commitments. Resolution 50/161, for example, which was adopted by the General Assembly last year, provides a firm basis for further action by Governments and the United Nations system. It also underscored the critical importance of national action and

international cooperation for social development. At the same time, it called for a suitably expanded Commission for Social Development, which, with a membership of 46 States meeting annually instead of biennially, will allow for greater participation in the monitoring of the implementation process. The Commission's role will also be further dynamized through the active involvement of civil society and relevant expert personnel.

The Commission's multi-year programme of work covering the period 1997-2000 will address the themes of productive employment and sustainable livelihoods; promoting the social integration and participation of all people, vulnerable groups and persons; and social services for all. We trust that the deliberations will be directed towards the eradication of poverty, which we consider a matter of urgency. As acknowledged at Copenhagen and oft repeated since, over one billion people in the world today live in unacceptable conditions of poverty, mostly in developing countries, with women and indigenous peoples especially disadvantaged. In Africa, the situation of people living in poverty is expected to worsen in the coming years with the concomitant threat of further instability on that continent. As was decided at the recent substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, there needs to be great coordination of United Nations system activities for poverty eradication, both at the national level and at headquarters. In this regard, the agreed conclusions of the Council on this issue should be fully implemented.

As part of our observance of the International Year and first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, we must actively pursue resolution S-1996/1 on strategies and actions for the eradication of poverty, which was adopted by the Commission for Social Development at its special session in May 1996. In this regard, we believe that the Caribbean Community Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Eradication, which is to be held around 28 October to 1 November in Trinidad and Tobago, will make an important contribution to the follow-up and implementation of this and other resolutions. Under the theme "Taking action on poverty eradication", the Ministers will identify priority action to be taken at the national and regional levels relating to poverty eradication as well as ways and means of enhancing inter-organizational cooperation within the region.

In my own country, the Government has mounted a relentless campaign against poverty. We have attempted to set clear objectives and provide means for their achievement. In this context, we are currently working to establish realistic and measurable targets and to design concrete plans and programmes of action. A national development strategy will soon be finalized to provide the framework for an action plan for poverty alleviation.

Regrettably, however, like so many other developing countries, we find our efforts severely constrained by an onerous debt burden, the servicing of which consumes a good part of national revenue, and by the negative effects of structural adjustment, particularly its impact on social infrastructure, including health, education and welfare provisions. We are therefore understandably anxious for the United Nations system as a whole to have a common understanding of our problems and in particular of the relationship between debt and poverty, between structural adjustment and poverty, and between drugs and poverty.

Against the background of limited resources at the domestic level, particular attention needs urgently to be paid by the United Nations to the mobilization of the substantial new and additional resources required for the full implementation of the commitments issuing from the Summit. We welcome in this regard, the United Nations Development Programme's Poverty Strategies Initiative and the United Nations Trust Fund for the Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development as concrete examples of commitment to supporting the efforts of developing countries. We need, however, to go further and expedite the implementation of existing debt-relief agreements and the negotiation of the further arrangements called for by our Heads of State and Government.

In this context we wish to acknowledge, with appreciation, the recent initiatives announced by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the International Development Association and the Paris Club to help the highly indebted and poorest countries. Still, we must continue to build on the mandate of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/48, regarding new and innovative ways to generate funds.

The search for new and innovative ideas must in no way, however, supplant already existing commitments to the financing of development. Official development assistance remains pivotal to the development of most developing countries, particularly the least developed, which, despite their best efforts, remain economically stagnant.

In conclusion, we believe that our attention must now be focused on operationalizing assistance for efforts

at the country level within the framework of national priorities and programmes through the active support of the United Nations system and the wider international community. For our part, we will continue to do all we can to promote social development, both nationally and internationally, so that when we come to the year 2000 and review the Copenhagen Programme of Action, we will be proud of the progress made.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: The World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in March 1995 was an important milestone in the joint international effort to establish a new international order and initiate a new phase in human history.

The lofty ideals of the Summit — the elimination of poverty, full employment and social integration — provided a framework to enable the international community to create a more just, secure and progressive world. My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, which reflected the position of developing countries on matters relating to the follow-up to the international Summit.

Each one of us will have to make efforts to implement the decisions and guidelines laid down at the Copenhagen Summit, in addition to the ambitious targets that it identified. My country believes that there can be no substitute for North-South and South-South cooperation in stemming the deterioration of social and economic conditions and in making the necessary adjustments in the international arena to promote the prosperity and stability of peoples.

We believe that the international community must be thorough and specific in expressing its solidarity with the developing countries in resolving their basic problems. We also believe that assistance given by developed countries to developing countries also benefits the donors and their future generations. For their part, developing countries should not rely solely on aid provided by developed countries; on the contrary, all the actions of the developing countries should reflect the principle of self-sufficiency. Those are the views of my country with regard to international cooperation and the achievement of social development at the international and local levels. Such cooperation should be based on the principles of mutual respect and mutual benefit.

Syria was an effective participant in the debate held at the recent session of the Commission for Social Development. We believe that it is important that every possible effort be made to consolidate and strengthen the Commission so that it can follow up on the results of the World Summit on Social Development at the appropriate level. We believe that the steps taken to expand the Commission and to convene its meetings on an annual basis are in keeping with the ambitions of the international community for the future role and mission of that body.

We would like to confirm the importance of the role of the Bretton Woods institutions in implementing the results of the Social Summit, especially in strengthening programmes for developing countries so that, no longer constrained by unsustainable conditions, they can make further efforts to promote social development and alleviate the debt burden under which many of them suffer.

Given Israel's policies of occupation, my country is obliged to invest greatly in its military technical and human strength. Modern Syria has carried out a very successful social development plan covering all sectors of society, to the extent allowed by our wealth, potential and, in particular, human factors.

I should like to refer to the fact that Syria is one of the 10 leading States in the developing world in the field of economic development, as the 1992 United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report makes clear. Over the past two decades Syria, through the efforts of President Hafez Al-Assad, has been approaching the problem of development essentially by concentrating on the basic target — the individual, the sole object of our efforts. We have therefore ensured that education at all levels and health services are provided free of charge. We have focused especially on the marginalized sectors of the population living under difficult circumstances. In this context, we are particularly concerned about children, the disabled, displaced persons, refugees, orphans, the elderly and others.

Throughout our territory, there are considerable networks of national organizations and associations of benevolent and civil institutions that play a distinctive role in society and freely and effectively participate in social activities for development. Furthermore, the Government of Syria has agreed to implement the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for

Persons with Disabilities, pursuant to resolution 48/96. All the policies that my country is pursuing in this respect have yielded major social accomplishments, and this has been specifically reflected in the standard of living of the majority of our citizens throughout our national territory. It has also resulted in an increase in education and health benefits for people in towns and villages. The level of health care and education has been enhanced and infant and maternal mortality has been reduced. This is part of a plan to foster national integration and to ensure opportunities for productive employment, with the aim of eliminating unemployment.

In the Syrian Golan, however, where many Syrians have had to leave their villages, work places and schools, the Israeli occupation has for more than a quarter of a century imposed a heavy burden on Syrian efforts to bring about social and economic development in the country. This occupation has increased the obstacles to our efforts to produce a higher standard of living.

Foreign occupation is a tremendous hindrance to our efforts for social development. Israel is occupying our territory and flagrantly violating the human rights of Arabs living under the yoke of its occupation. Israel is pursuing systematic policies aimed at distorting our national identity and pillaging our resources by destroying houses, confiscating lands and acting against our citizens.

The time that has elapsed since the World Summit for Social Development may seem brief, but my country has been working on genuine social development for over two decades. My country has attached particular importance to the results of the World Summit. A world free of colonialism, foreign occupation and aggression, and protected from the threat of racial hegemony, expansionism or colonization is the necessary precursor of a world free of poverty, injustice and oppression, in which relations are more democratic, humane, secure and stable for the well-being of one and all.

Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: Kuwait has always attached particular importance to the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995, where Kuwait was represented at the Summit by His Highness the Emir. The Summit led to the revitalization of the Commission for Social Development to follow up on the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

Permanence is the characteristic feature of Kuwait's efforts in the areas of social development, human settlements and administrative policies, as well as in measures to encourage the private sector, within the framework of the economic and social development process for the years 1995-1996 and up to the year 2000. The basic aim of these planning and development efforts is to make the citizens of Kuwait productive and to improve the human and cultural dimensions of society.

Social development in Kuwait is covered by several education, cultural, information and social welfare programmes that enhance the participation of citizens in various areas of social activity. These programmes also promote the role of women as the mothers of future generations, without reducing their role in the workforce, while strengthening programmes of social welfare with a special emphasis on children, adolescents and marginalized groups. Of particular importance are measures to manage and coordinate volunteer activities between the Government and national institutions, as well as those that foster cooperation and rationalization. People can thereby participate in the social sector to improve health services, focus on problems of consumption and production and help to offset unfortunate trends in those particular areas.

To that end, Kuwait has created machinery that has had an important impact on achieving the goals of social development. Government annual expenditure in that sector reached 53.5 per cent of gross national product in the 1980s, 108 per cent in the period 1990-1993, and nearly 82 per cent in 1993. This was due to the financial and economic costs of reconstruction after the liberation of Kuwait in February 1991, as well as to the efforts of the State to continue to finance social services.

Before the discovery of oil on its territory, Kuwait met the challenges of life under extremely difficult economic conditions, which is why we are very aware of the problems being faced by developing countries. Since Kuwait has achieved a surplus from its oil earnings, it can now participate in social and economic development activities. Part of our assistance to developing countries is in the form of loans and grants made through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, which was created in 1961 to implement development programmes and economic and social programmes in Arab and Muslim countries, as well as other fraternal and friendly countries. As of 1994, that Fund had granted 445 individual loans to the amount of 2.22 billion dinars. Through non-governmental organizations in Kuwait and through projects drawn up by those organizations, Kuwait has been able to demonstrate the human dimension of its

assistance. The rate of assistance provided by Kuwait was 4.4 per cent of the gross national product in the 1980s.

Although Kuwait is a donor and creditor country, we are aware of the problems faced by developing countries in the area of social development, and in particular from the debt burden. That is why Kuwait has made an appeal to all donors to forgive part of their debts and to write off some of their interest to the benefit of the poorest countries. This was clearly reflected in the statement of Mr. Al-Sabah to the General Assembly on 28 September 1988, when he said that Kuwait was ready to cancel the debts of those countries. This is testimony to Kuwait's pioneering efforts on behalf of international development.

We welcome the role being played by the Commission for Social Development in the Copenhagen Programme of Action, the main elements of which are to be implemented in coming years. We wish to reaffirm our sincere commitment to cooperating with the Commission in order to achieve the targets set in Copenhagen, as well as implementing the Programme of Action.

My delegation would also like to emphasize the importance of the efforts being made by the regional economic commissions in following up on the results of the Social Summit. In particular, we point to the efforts of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. Efforts are being made, in cooperation with the International Labour Organization, to design profiles for poverty- alleviation policies in four sectors: health, education, employment and fiscal policy. As regards social integration in Lebanon, we must define precise measures for achieving the social development objectives specified for that country.

My delegation would like to commend the efforts of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support national activities to promote follow-up to the Copenhagen Programme of Action and its assistance to national programmes in creating favourable conditions for the implementation of national poverty-eradication plans and strategies. It is our hope that UNDP will be able to implement the 42 proposals that have been approved for funding under the Poverty Strategies Initiative.

My delegation would like to reiterate its intention fully to cooperate, through the Kuwaiti National Committee, in the follow-up to the Copenhagen Programme of Action and the decisions taken at that Summit.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I would like to extend our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his informative report, contained in document A/51/348 and entitled "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development". My delegation would also like to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Nineteen months have elapsed since the successful convening of the World Summit at Copenhagen, where the Heads of State and Government carefully examined the grave social problems facing humanity at large. Amongst other ills, poverty, unemployment and deteriorating social integration — which had already been identified as the most acute problems threatening the well-being and prosperity of the world community — were at the top of the Summit's agenda. They were duly and comprehensively addressed by the participants who, at the conclusion of the Summit, committed themselves to according the highest priority to national, regional and international policies and actions for the promotion of social progress worldwide. This commitment entailed, *inter alia*, the realization of justice for all and the betterment of the human condition in an environment conducive to participation by all.

Now, at this follow-up phase, we need to utilize the opportunity provided to take stock of both the achievements and progress made and of the shortcomings and failures encountered. Thus, a thorough evaluation and an objective assessment of international endeavours and national initiatives is in order if we are determined to ensure an effective and coordinated follow-up to the commitments undertaken at the Summit.

Let us begin by reviewing the concrete measures taken at the international level to achieve the main goals of the Summit: the eradication of poverty, the expansion of productive employment and the enhancement of social integration.

It goes without saying that unrelenting poverty is the most serious problem facing humankind today. For developing countries, it is aggravated by debt burdens, widespread unemployment, deepening environmental crises, lack of adequate international aid and deterioration in the trade environment due to the protectionist policies of certain States. We strongly believe that a renewed and focused commitment to international cooperation is an imperative if we are to ease poverty globally. We may recall that, although the Social Summit acknowledged that

the primary responsibility to attain the goals set out in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action rests with national Governments, it also emphasized the importance of support and contributions from the international community, the United Nations and multilateral financial institutions.

One of the commitments made at the Summit was to mobilize new and additional financial resources that are adequate, predictable and mobilized to maximize the availability of such resources. Subsequently the Commission for Social Development, at its special session in 1996, reiterated that commitment by calling for the implementation of agreed measures to eradicate poverty and for strengthened international cooperation.

Nevertheless, we have noted with concern certain indicators that point to a contrary trend. Apart from some actions taken by relevant bodies of the United Nations, there is little substantive international cooperation in this respect. In paragraph 34 of the Secretary-General's report, we read that

> "the Council expressed concern at the decline in concessional resources for multilateral development institutions, which makes it more difficult for them to respond to the massive challenge of assisting countries in poverty eradication." *(A/51/348, para. 34)*

In light of the preceding observations — all of which tend to point to the responsibility of the international community to generate a substantial increase in the flow of external resources for poverty eradication — we now need to raise the question as to whether the international community, particularly multilateral financial institutions, are willing to play their role and to take action in this regard.

Addressing the question of debt reduction or cancellation, identified in the Secretary-General's report in paragraph 19, has been stressed as one of the main prerequisites for the implementation of the goals of the Summit. It goes without saying that the main responsibility here rests first with the developed countries. It should be emphasized, however, that the developing countries are not looking for hand-outs; rather they are calling for fair play in the world economy and honest observance of the rules of the game. Genuine competition and laying the foundations for a market economy are effectively hampered by the ever-growing burdens of protectionism. A reversal of protective trade policies as well as the removal of obstacles for the smooth and unhindered transfer of technology are among the priority areas requiring action.

The problems of unemployment and underemployment must be tackled at two levels. At the global level, dismantling of trade barriers by developed countries, flow of financial resources and investment to developing nations, transfer of technology, alleviation of the debt burden and sharing experiences can play an important role. Although most countries follow economic policies based on market forces, the attainment of reasonable development seems to be out of reach, if not impossible. Many developing countries have adopted and implemented structural adjustment policies, improved the overall level of management and committed themselves to combat internal corruption; despite all that, their development is still arrested. Many of these countries have opted for the free-market-economy solution only to be disillusioned by the obliterating impact of an unfavourable international environment.

On the home front, supporting the private and informal sectors, promotion of self-employment, provision of credit facilities to the unemployed, encouraging the creation of volunteer organizations including grass-roots financial organizations, investment in training and education programmes, optimal use of resources such as land and water, expansion of labour-intensive economic activities and a focus on the service sector are among the necessary first steps.

It has been strongly suggested that prescriptions designed to realize national social integration should also be applied at the international level. To this end, each State should have an equitable and fair share in shaping the international economic, social and political order. We need to forge a rule-based system of international relations in which might and wealth do not generate rights and in which principles of international law are fully observed. The coercive economic measures and unilateral actions used by certain States against developing countries are inconsistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter and also contradict the Declaration of the World Summit for Social Development which, *inter alia*, requires States to refrain from any unilateral measure not in accordance with international law and the Charter or that creates obstacles to trade relations among States. Such measures are aimed at imposing the will of one State on others, and consequently impede the natural process of social development in developing countries. I would like to emphasize that promotion of respect for the rule of law

by all States, big and small, and for the priority of multilateralism and not unilateral actions, are the hallmarks of our shrinking world. This is an approach that serves the interests of the international community as a whole.

We also learn, from paragraph 22 of the report, of some views of leaders of the Group of Seven industrialized countries, reflected in the final communiqué from their most recent meeting at Lyon, France. While that communiqué, among other things, calls for strengthening economic and monetary cooperation and for the provision of necessary multilateral support for development, it is astonishing to witness how one of the members of that group, in total disregard of those stated purposes, which are relevant issues to the follow-up of the Copenhagen Summit, and in pursuance of its own short-sighted and politically motivated interests, vehemently imposes unilateral coercive measures through the adoption of legislation with extraterritorial effects against other countries. The world community can no longer tolerate this arrogant behaviour and irresponsible attitude, and should react appropriately and swiftly to stop this trend before lawlessness receives de facto recognition.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's development strategies, policy plans and programmes are being reoriented to a people-centred human development approach. In that process, the quality of life of the people has emerged as a new focus of concern. Despite unfavourable external factors, economic hardship and the long-term financial and social implications of hosting 2 million to 4 million refugees for over 17 years, a large portion of total public expenditure has been allocated to social development and poverty alleviation, which has had an effect on social indicators.

Having incorporated these elements into its second five-year national development plan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, in line with its commitments undertaken at the Summit, has embarked upon a wide range of initiatives, some of which can be summarized as follows: a national project for poverty eradication was adopted by our President last month. Identifying economic hardship of the people, creating the appropriate bases and opportunities for full employment of both men and women and addressing the causes of vulnerable social groups, particularly the disabled and elderly, are among its major goals.

To ensure youth the development and welfare, we have established the High Council for Youth. This Council coordinates the activities of other organizations and bodies working for youth, with the aim of identifying priority areas of concern, such as employment, education and leisure time activities.

To further promote the dignity and worthiness of the disabled, a specific department has been set up in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to coordinate and supervise the development of medical and social protective services and to ensure the availability of jobs for the disabled. Furthermore, 10 per cent of overall employment opportunities have been allocated to war veterans and the disabled.

The share of the development budget, in total, increased from 19.4 per cent in 1988-1989 to 38 per cent in 1994-1995, and it is foreseen that the ambitious goal of 48 per cent will be reached in 1996-1997, a step unprecedented throughout the history of Iran's economy.

Major headway has been made in infrastructural development, so that potable water, roads, schools, telephone services, clinics, and other basic services have been brought to thousands of cities, towns and villages, including the remotest areas of the country. At this time, 76 per cent of the population in rural areas have access to proper roads, 74 per cent benefit from electricity, and 86 per cent have access to safe drinking-water. By the end of the second development plan, running from 1995 to 1999, some 98.9 per cent of the urban population will be supplied with sanitary piped water.

Nearly 80 per cent of the rural population and all people in the urban areas have easy and free access to basic health care. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) report entitled "Summary of mid-term reviews of country programmes" stated that the multiple indicator cluster survey conducted in September 1995 in the Islamic Republic of Iran

> "confirmed that most of the mid-decade goals have been achieved. Therefore, the focus has now shifted to goals for the end of the decade." *(E/ICEF/1996/P/L.42, para. 30)*

Meanwhile, the Government has taken steps to improve the economic conditions of people in lower income brackets by adopting and implementing different measures such as enforcement of agricultural support programmes through subsidized input and guaranteed price floors for the output, an inflation-adjusted minimum wage for workers in manufacturing, low-priced public utilities for the lower consumption levels, and subsidized housing.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that the common responsibilities of all of us — Governments, United Nations bodies, and non-governmental organizations — in ensuring the implementation of the commitments undertaken at the World Summit for Social Development require joint efforts at all levels. In this regard, the Islamic Republic of Iran is prepared to continue its active participation in collective endeavours in order to achieve the goals of the Social Summit.

Ms. Thahim (Pakistan): Last year, here at the General Assembly, we proclaimed the critical importance of national and international action for social development. We stressed that for an effective follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, we required renewed political will and the definition of time-bound targets for the eradication of poverty, generation of productive employment and promotion of social integration.

To achieve these objectives, a multi-pronged strategy was adopted. First, Governments were to initiate their efforts with the support of the United Nations, the multilateral financial institutions, regional organizations and all actors of civil society. Second, the United Nations had to launch a three-tiered intergovernmental process. Third, the Commission for Social Development was to be revitalized. Fourth, the Economic and Social Council was to provide overall guidance and to oversee system-wide coordination in the implementation of the outcome of the Summit.

We must express satisfaction over the impressive progress made towards the achievement of these goals. In this context, we would like to compliment the Secretary-General for presenting a comprehensive report on the implementation of the outcome of the Summit. The exhaustive overview in the Secretary-General's report clearly indicates that we have laid down the foundations for concerted and coordinated action.

The goals of the eradication of poverty, reduction of unemployment and expansion of productive employment remain areas of top priority. The policy deliberations in the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council in this regard are very important. Ultimate success will, however, depend on operational programmes being implemented in the countries with the help of United Nations agencies, regional commissions and multilateral financial institutions. The inputs of other functional commissions, particularly the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Population Development, the Statistical Commission and the Commission on Human Rights, are highly valuable. The activities of the regional commissions, however, need to be upgraded.

The follow-up to the Social Summit should not merely lead to a boom in expert meetings. The real objective, namely the alleviation of the suffering of hundreds of millions of people, should not be blurred in a plethora of activities. All initiatives have to remain cost-efficient and should not be bogged down in minutiae. Above all, the goals and targets have to be very realistic. Otherwise, at the end of the first five years, we shall be forced to report a failure.

The United Nations Secretariat has made valuable contributions to the follow-up process. As the Secretary-General's report indicates, during last year the United Nations Secretariat brought out excellent publications on social development. These publications, which provide useful guidelines to decision makers, could be disseminated in a more focused manner. Due regard should be given to their timely transmission to the focal points in missions and capitals.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator's Poverty Strategies Initiative launched early this year has enormous potential. We must fully support this initiative as it holds tremendous promise for the implementation of poverty eradication plans and programmes. The funds allocated to various programmes in different regions are very paltry. At present, they are merely notional and represent just a beginning. In this regard, the UNDP Resident Coordinator system's collaborative follow-up should be further strengthened. Within the existing inter-agency framework, UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Bretton Woods institutions can steer the follow-up process from analysis to implementation to monitoring to periodic review.

We welcome the World Bank's decision to expand its work in the areas of social development. The new external financing provided for education, health and nutrition will indirectly contribute towards the eradication of poverty. Direct investment in projects aimed at eliminating poverty will produce quick and tangible results. The increasing attention devoted by the International Monetary Fund to devising measures to protect the most vulnerable segments of society is a step in the right direction. The focus of the World Bank and

IMF on the efficiency of public expenditure is a worthy goal, but one that requires public debate and closer scrutiny.

The time-bound targets in the areas of poverty, primary education, gender equity, health care and sustainable development adopted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries might be unrealistic because they are not matched by any commitment for resources.

The decrease in official development assistance following the Social Summit is disturbing. In his annual report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General has noted that in the last year such assistance declined to 0.27 per cent of gross national product, against the agreed United Nations target of 0.7 per cent. We, however, support the reorientation of official development assistance to development support.

The Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the social Summit cites the overall new income of UNDP. We would have appreciated a clearer correlation of UNDP's new income with the Summit goals, although we do realize that such a breakdown would have been a difficult exercise. We hope that the new funding of $22 billion announced for the International Development Association (IDA) in March of this year will be oriented towards the outcome of the goals of the Social Summit, with particular emphasis on poverty eradication. No meaningful progress has yet been made in the field of new and innovative resources that could ultimately bail the United Nations out of its financial crisis. For independent decision-making, the United Nations needs financial autonomy. We must therefore redouble our efforts to identify new and innovative resources. The problem of the alleviation of the debt-servicing burden is being addressed at a very slow pace.

We must express our satisfaction at the consistent efforts made to establish an effective partnership between Governments and the actors of civil society on the one hand and non-governmental organizations and the United Nations on the other. The 28-year-old Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) was updated this year to ensure, *inter alia*, an enhanced and more meaningful involvement of non-governmental organizations in the implementation of social policies at the national and international levels and in the follow-up to the social Summit. The active participation of non-governmental organizations in the follow-up would go a long way towards guaranteeing the success of our efforts.

The Government of Pakistan actively participated in the preparatory process to the World Summit for Social Development. We are pursuing the goals of the Summit in close cooperation with the United Nations, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and multilateral financial institutions. Pakistan has launched an $8 billion social action programme, which focuses on poverty eradication, basic education, primary health care, nutrition, water supply and sanitation. Within this framework, additional elements related to poverty eradication, the empowerment of women, the generation of employment and environmental protection have been included. Our programmes are being supported by United Nations agencies based in Pakistan, donor countries and the World Bank. The Government of Pakistan is determined to achieve the goals of the Summit by utilizing its own resources. However, such a Herculean task cannot he accomplished without massive investment in human-resource development.

The central plank of our social action programme is the massive spread of primary education, with an acceleration of the enrolment of girls. In one year alone, 10,800 new primary schools have been established; 34,000 new schools are being opened. To achieve our objective of the universalization of primary education by the year 2000, we have increased the allocation of expenditure on education. In this context, special emphasis is being given to female education and health. Some 60 per cent of the funds have been allocated to female literacy, and 70 per cent of the new schools planned over the next three years will be for girls. In addition, under the Prime Minister's national health-workers scheme, 100,000 girls are being trained to provide multiple services encompassing health, education and population welfare.

All of these measures undertaken by the Government of Pakistan require consistent and determined efforts, the participation of the private sector and non-governmental organizations and the enhanced support of the international community. The international efforts should not be limited solely to policy debates, research and data collection. The answer lies in technical cooperation and training programmes at the operational level. Enhanced international technical assistance and advisory services can decisively strengthen national capacities and the institutional bases for supporting national plans and strategies that are designed to bring about sustained and sustainable social development.

In conclusion, I would express the hope that all necessary steps will be taken to build on the elaborate framework put in place by the United Nations, United Nations agencies, Governments and multilateral institutions. Our deep political commitment, clear direction and faithful implementation of the Summit decisions can sustain our efforts.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I would like to associate myself with the statement made by the representative of Ireland on behalf of the members of the European Union. However, I should like to add some comments. At the World Summit for Social Development, all the participants acknowledged that the primary responsibility for attaining the goals set forth in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action rested with national Governments, with the support and contribution of the international community.

Poland welcomes the new framework created by the General Assembly for the activities of the Commission for Social Development as the functional commission with the main responsibility for the follow-up and review of the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development. We are pleased that in the draft resolution it submitted to the Economic and Social Council the Commission recommended a multi-year programme of work to the year 2000. That programme of work covers themes that, in our opinion, are central to social development.

In a world that is changing at extraordinary speed, the central phenomenon of our age seems to be rapidly growing interdependence, from the globalization of the world economy to the information revolution. That being so, does not our future depend on equitable and sustainable development in all parts of the world? In our view, such development depends, in turn, on flows of development assistance from the better-off to the less developed countries and on opening up the world's markets to trade and investment, but mainly on the efforts of each individual country to support its own social and economic development and to adapt to the fluctuating external environment.

We believe that the starting point is economic growth. Economic growth creates employment, which is by far the most effective mechanism for distributing wealth and opportunity so that both developed and developing countries can alleviate poverty. Governments are wont to assume that economic growth alone will eventually sort out their social problems. However, economic growth alone will not ensure jobs for the long-term unemployed.

Structural changes taking place in the Polish economy, accompanied by changes in ownership, have already resulted in significant shifts in the social distribution of income. Creation of an economic new deal, however, is not possible without social approval. Acquiring such approval for a structural process is connected, *inter alia*, with the need to initiate activities to prevent the extension of the sphere of poverty. Upon analysing the sources of poverty and its extent, it was assumed that support for economic growth, which reduces unemployment by raising labour demand, was a method of overcoming poverty as it existed in Poland. The assumptions with regard to the socio-economic development of the country, as formulated in the long-term document entitled "Strategy for Poland" and in a supplementary "Programme of socio-economic policy for the years 1994-1997," are in conformity with the recommendations that emerged from the World Summit for Social Development. The multidimensional approach to developmental problems presented in the "Strategy for Poland," including the treatment of social issues, corresponds to the commitments entered into during the Summit.

With regard to income security, the protection of a guaranteed minimum wage level within the national economy has been established by law. As another element of the social network aimed at ensuring social safety, we should mention activities aimed at halting and then restraining unemployment and at providing the unemployed, during a period delimited by the law, with the minimum means of subsistence.

Several social guarantees which have been designed to limit poverty are contained in our universal social insurance scheme. In the framework of this scheme, the State guarantees a source of income in respect to specified risks through programmes to promote productive employment and decrease unemployment, and to promote youth vocational activities. These programmes assume that special training and retraining strategies, particularly for youth and the long-term unemployed, should be widened and made more diverse. They also provide, as a target, the integration of the education system with youth and adult training, so as to better adjust the manpower resources structure to the needs of the labour market.

Taking into account the particularly strong influence of unfavourable economic and social trends upon the disabled, since 1994 the Government has implemented a programme to help the disabled and help integrate them into the society. Particular support has been given to vocational rehabilitation and the employment of the disabled.

The Polish social-security system is going through complex reform. The reform is aimed at restructuring the whole social-welfare system to ensure that incomes received from work and from social benefits guarantee an adequate standard of living, and that social assistance is used only to intervene in special situations. An unemployment insurance system and a programme to actively counteract unemployment are being developed, with a particular emphasis on the promotion of the economic activity of the unemployed in small towns and in rural areas and of the disabled.

We believe that the role of civil society in the follow-up and implementation process of the World Summit is highly important. Poland supports the efforts made by the Economic and Social Council to stimulate an informal dialogue within the Commission for Social Development, *inter alia* through the use of panels of experts to discuss with non-governmental organizations the priority subjects identified at the World Summit. We support the proposal that non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to participate in the work of the Commission.

It is necessary to increase public awareness of the outcome of the World Summit and of the results achieved to date. Nothing can take the place of the United Nations efforts, not only to emphasize the importance of the problems before us but above all to implement what the Summit recommended in the field of socially oriented development. Entering the twenty-first century, our Organization — we ourselves — should be able to meet the challenge of adding a human dimension to development. Human beings are, after all, our primary objective. This basic assumption of the Summit should guide us in our deliberations on the follow-up of what was decided at Copenhagen.

Mr. Teagarajan (Malaysia): The Malaysian delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his report, entitled "Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development" (A/51/348). The report provides an important and useful framework for our deliberations in this Assembly. My delegation also wishes to associate itself with the statement made yesterday by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Nineteen months have passed since our leaders met at Copenhagen and pledged their commitment to a global political, economic, ethical and spiritual vision for social development. Their commitment took into consideration the various religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds of all the peoples around the globe. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action symbolize this basic compact. If we recall, the following were the core issues discussed at the Summit: first, the reduction of overall poverty and the eradication of absolute poverty; secondly, the expansion of productive employment and the reduction of unemployment; and thirdly, the enhancement of social integration, particularly of the more disadvantaged and marginalized groups.

In following up on the decisions made at Copenhagen we must be guided by the principle of the centrality of people in the development process. In the pursuit of social justice, solidarity, harmony and equality among peoples, the international community must continue to promote the cause of pluralism and just economic and social development. Even as we witness the economic and social prosperity enjoyed by certain parts of the global community, we cannot be oblivious to the increasing numbers of people in both the North and the South who are living in abject poverty. It is utterly untenable, indeed deplorable, that about 1.3 billion people, a fifth of the human race, still lack access to the most basic necessities of life such as food and clean drinking water. Therefore, we should collectively strive towards an action-oriented programme that seeks to ensure that poverty eradication is achieved.

While the Declaration and Programme of Action of the Copenhagen Summit clearly defined the issues relating to poverty, employment and social integration, the commitments made in respect of international assistance, official development assistance and new additional resources have regrettably not been fulfilled. At the same time, major donor countries have been reluctant to provide additional resources. In the Copenhagen Declaration, donor Governments pledged to strive to achieve the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for overall official development assistance as soon as possible, and to increase the share of funding for social-development programmes to achieve the objectives and goals of the Declaration and the Programme of Action. Unfortunately, the achievement of this target has been far from satisfactory. This is very

disheartening. The major donors must live up to the pledges made if they are to contribute in any meaningful way to alleviating the plight of the world's poor and underprivileged.

My delegation notes the positive involvement of and the serious initiatives taken by various actors in the field of social development — national Governments, the various United Nations organs and bodies, the Bretton Woods institutions, regional organizations and the non-governmental actors — in trying to achieve what was agreed to at the Copenhagen Summit. Clearly all these initiatives require adequate resources to make them a reality. Indeed, unless concrete actions are taken and financial resources found for their execution, the observance of 1996 as the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty will have been rather meaningless. I am afraid the same fate will befall the proclamation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty unless these commitments and pledges are fulfilled.

My delegation has noted that the Secretary-General's report refers to the initiatives undertaken by the Bretton Woods institutions — namely the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund — in pursuance of the Summit recommendations, especially in the areas of social development and human resource development.

We welcome the World Bank's new external finance for the social sector, which amounts to $3.33 billion for education, health, population programmes and nutrition. We also welcome the initiatives by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to provide special assistance to heavily indebted countries. In welcoming these initiatives we hope that they are carried out in a fair and just manner. These institutions should act neither as the debt collectors for the rich North nor as the enforcers of the lenders.

My delegation wishes to underline the importance of social integration in the context of social development. The security of the human person demands a comprehensive and integrated approach which takes into account all other factors, including cultural and religious values and norms.

Given the vast differences in the level of development between the poorest and least developed countries, those in transition economies and those which are highly industrialized, due consideration ought to be given to identifying and agreeing on the priorities for the implementation of the Programme of Action at the global level. We should be mindful that the priorities and the measures proposed to implement the Programme may not be appropriate to all Member States. We should also never forget that, at the end of the day, the primary responsibility for implementing the Summit's agreed objectives will fall on the individual Member States.

As for the institutional follow-up, the United Nations system undeniably has a role as a catalyst in the implementation of the Programme of Action. On the one hand, the General Assembly should continue formulating the overall policies *vis-à-vis* implementation. The Economic and Social Council, on the other hand, would provide the overall guidance and oversee system-wide coordination in the implementation of the outcome of the Summit and make recommendations in that regard within the United Nations system. The coordinating role played by the Economic and Social Council in bringing the agencies involved in the implementation of the Programme of Action into a closer working relationship would ensure the avoidance of duplication of responsibilities.

My delegation wishes to reiterate Malaysia's commitment to the pledge made by the world's leaders at the World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen in 1995. This is reflected in the various Government policies and programmes which are well established and broadly supported by the people. In addition, the administrative machinery and processes for implementing, monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of those policies are also very much in place and are generally functioning in an effective fashion.

Through its socio-economic policies and programme for development Malaysia has been able to reduce drastically the incidence of poverty, to achieve virtually full employment, and to strengthen social integration and unity. This will continue to be one of the thrusts of the seventh Malaysia Plan for 1996 to 2000.

Mr. de Rojas (Venezuela) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: Venezuela endorses the statements made on this agenda item by the delegation of Bolivia, on behalf of the Rio Group, and by the delegation of Costa Rica, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The delegation of Venezuela also wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the implementation of the outcome of the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development (A/51/348), and to express its support for its contents.

My country is aware of the dramatic growth of poverty and the spread of new forms of exclusion which threaten human dignity of most of the citizens of the world. We consider social development a crucial challenge of our time. The Venezuelan Government therefore maintains that future generations' judgment of our time will depend on our ability to address successfully the challenges of poverty and social exclusion.

The convening of the World Summit for Social Development renewed the hope of the Government and the people of Venezuela. Following the Summit we immediately decided to take action to follow up the agreements reached at that landmark social forum. This was in accordance with what was laid down at the Summit, whereby it was stressed that national Governments are the actors responsible for bringing about the goals of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

My country's new strategy in the social area has been designed not only in terms of our own activities in that area; rather, it forms part of the State's new economic policy: "Agenda Venezuela". In this agenda the operation of the productive apparatus itself is expected to generate greater equity.

One of the important components of this commitment to social solidarity is raising the capacity for organization in order to generate the ability among the most disadvantaged part of the population to obtain its fair share of the social product. The promotion of community organizations is in keeping with this line of action. We should also stress that this social commitment involves continuation of family supplementary income systems. As social programmes require time to be established and to mature, they should not be dismantled or replaced until better and more efficient alternatives are found.

My country has assumed the responsibility to diminish poverty in the short term through social and economic strategies geared not only towards meeting basic physical needs such as health, nutrition, education and work, but which are also aimed at defending human rights and promoting the equitable distribution of income and wealth. This commitment implies activities in three specific areas. The first involves promoting the development of a system of social and household services for low-income families through programmes of family and student subsidies and care for the elderly. The second involves reviewing the legal framework and administrative procedures to ensure access by the most disadvantaged to economic, financial and technological resources, in order to join fully the labour market. The third involves promoting programmes for qualification and training to orient the labour force towards non-traditional activities.

Regionally, Venezuela has supported all of the initiatives of the Rio Group aimed at ensuring the full follow-up of the commitments of the World Summit for Social Development. Accordingly, we have been working closely with the countries of that Group to implement the provisions of the Buenos Aires declaration on fulfilment of the commitments of the Summit, and of its annex, which sets out the regional follow-up programme. Both documents reflect the imperative need to eradicate poverty as a key element of our region's social agenda.

In this context, Venezuela welcomed the recommendation of the Rio Group on the lead body for coordination of the follow-up of activities in the social sphere. In so doing it designated as national coordinator the Ministry of Family Affairs, as the governmental agency entrusted with the design and execution of social policies. At the same time, it invited civil society to take part in this endeavour.

At the hemispheric level, during the Summit of the Americas Venezuela reiterated the priority importance it attaches to the social sphere and gave its support to the convening of the Hemispheric Conference on the Eradication of Poverty and Discrimination held in January 1996 at Santiago, Chile.

Accordingly, the Government of Venezuela worked with countries of the hemisphere to identify innovative and creative measures to attack poverty through focused national programmes, the formulation of goals, and reform of the social sectors within the process of modernization of the State.

My Government believes it is imperative to support the idea of international social justice. To this end, each and every member of the international community must do its part towards what we refer to as the universal common good. With this idea in mind, it becomes ever more imperative to review the terms of the external debt that weighs heavily upon the developing countries and makes it difficult to meet the demands of development.

Venezuela believes it is encouraging for the international community that the United Nations is responsibly addressing the subject of social development today, more earnestly than ever, as we come to the end of the twentieth century. This has been further buttressed

by the Organization's recent world conferences geared to the social sphere, which also demonstrates that this is a complex task requiring a multidisciplinary, coordinated approach with an important ethical component. We hope that implementation of the outcome of the Summit will give renewed impetus to cooperation between countries and international organizations in order comprehensively to achieve development, justice and peace.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Arabic)*: There are no further speakers on this item. The draft resolution to be submitted under agenda item 45 will be considered at a later date to be announced.

Reports of the Fifth Committee

The Acting President *(interpretation from Arabic)*: The General Assembly will now consider the reports of the Fifth Committee on agenda items 126, 133 and 135.

If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Fifth Committee which are before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Arabic)*: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote. The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind members that under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401 the Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee".

May I also remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Committee.

Agenda item 126

Financing of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/51/502)

The Acting President *(interpretation from Arabic)*: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report (A/51/502).

The draft resolution was adopted by the Fifth Committee without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly too wishes to adopt the draft resolution?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 51/2).

The Acting President *(interpretation from Arabic)*: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 126.

Agenda item 133

Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/51/503)

The Acting President *(interpretation from Arabic)*: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report (A/51/503).

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Arabic)*: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 133.

Agenda item 135

Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/51/504)

The Acting President *(interpretation from Arabic)*: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report (A/51/504).

The draft resolution was adopted in the Fifth Committee without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly too wishes to adopt it?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 51/3).

The Acting President *(interpretation from Arabic)*: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 135.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.